

COMANCHE BABY LANGUAGE

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195 The Comanche language¹ reveals an un-
868 usually rich and formalized vocabulary of
special baby words which were used in teach-
195 ing the child to speak. Their use began
868 when the child was old enough to under-
856 stand, at about one year according to inform-
ants, and dropped off as the child matured
and learned the normal, adult locutions at
the age of 3 to 4. If a child persisted in using
these words after the age of 5 or so, it would
be laughed at and ridiculed for its babyish
ways. Today English holds sway and these
baby words no longer function actively, al-
though children in those families or house-
holds where there are older persons who
speak only Comanche may have some knowl-
edge of them. So of necessity these data
were recorded from the lips of adult speakers,
most of whom, however, maintain a lively
memory of the baby forms.

195 The following list was checked with eight
178 informants and is probably exhaustive.
124 Where known, the adult form or derivation is
given in brackets after the translation of the
baby word or words.

195 ?áʔh, ?áx, ?áʔhA something nasty or dirty;
192 feces, urine, penis, a smell; warning to get away
from something dirty; I have wet, dirtied my-
self; command for baby to defecate.

?aʔháʔ no good! (said to baby).

The next two forms are used in speaking to
and by older children. They are derived
from the baby words, but with regular verbal
suffixes.

?áʔhi'kwá go off and defecate!

?áʔhi, ?áʔhini? I have dirtied myself.

?aná, ?anáʔ it hurts! (pointing to place);
sore place, cut; command to child to get away
from thing or place where it might get hurt.

[101] ¹ The material for this paper was gathered on a
[122] field trip sponsored by Columbia University to the
Comanche Indians living near Indianola, Okla-
homa during the summer of 1940.